



My TriniDad

a short play

by Albert Fried-Cassorla

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CHARACTERS

Roxanne A Trinidadian girl of 12,
 on holiday in Barbados

Alfred An American tourist in his 40's,
 on holiday in Barbados

SETTING

At a resort beach in Barbados, in the water of the Caribbean Sea. The surf is heard in the background. Seashells are scattered about the floor, including a few large ones nearby the actors.

A suggestion to the director or set designer: This play takes place entirely in or near the shore, as the swimmers stand, swim, or tread water.

Minimal set: This play can work with no scenery or minimal scenery. For dramatic effect, however, you may wish to use a long streamer waving in front of the actors at about neck level, to indicate the undulating water. The actors can stand and imitate swimming or water-treading movements.

Another idea for indicating the sea is the use of a waving piece of cloth, perhaps aquamarine and iridescent. Two lengths of such cloth could wave from one wing to the other, with the actors positioned in the small gap between them.

More elaborate staging: Actors can be provided with carts on which they lie. This would enable them to lie horizontally, adding to the realism of actual

swimming. The carts can be maneuvered from off-stage via wires.

AT RISE

ROXANNE and ALFRED are swimming, each at a different end of the stage. They get closer to each other without noticing each other, as they swim. ALFRED treads water easily. ROXANNE swims, but with greater difficulty. She goes below the surface from time to time. ROXANNE hums almost all the while. They notice each other and smile.

ROXANNE

I love the water, don't you?

ALFRED

Yeah, it's so relaxing.

ROXANNE

I come here all the time.

ALFRED

You're lucky.

ROXANNE

My Grandmom, she takes us here two times a year. We're from Trinidad.

ALFRED

How long are you staying in Barbados?

ROXANNE

For three weeks. And me and my brother Joseph and my Grandmom -- we still have two weeks left! Eee-YAY!

ALFRED

Do you go to school during the year?

ROXANNE

Sure I go to school! I want to **be** something. My Grandmom, she says I will be something, if I stick to it and do what I am supposed to. What you think -- will I be something?

ALFRED (smiling)

Of course! But your Grandmom's right, you do have to work at it.

(ALFRED swims or treads water gracefully from one spot to another.)

ROXANNE

How do you swim so easy?

ALFRED

I grew up by the ocean, near New York City.

ROXANNE (*pouting*)

I grew up near the ocean, too, but I cannot swim so good.

ALFRED

Well, I had swimming lessons in camp when I was a kid. Makes it a lot easier!

ROXANNE

You teach me, then!

ALFRED

Well, I'll try. You've got some of the basics. Now you've got to smooth it out.... Put your arms out in front of you, one at a time....

(ROXANNE swims more evenly, but with her head still out of the water.)

But to really become a good swimmer, you've got to get your head **in** the water. You breathe in at your side **above** water and then blow out **in** the water. Here, I'll show you.

(ALFRED swims around in a little circle, stops, treads water, gasps a bit, wipes his face and smiles.)

Okay. Now *you* try!

ROXANNE

I hate to get my eyes and ears wet! My brother Joseph -- he's even worse. He's a bigger scaredy-cat than me. Oh, how that boy cries!

ALFRED

Well?

ROXANNE

You want me to do this.

ALFRED

No. *You* do. Because you want to become a better swimmer.

(ROXANNE works up a head of resolve.)

ROXANNE

Okay, I'll do it.

(ROXANNE immerses her head in the water, and with a lot of effort, she approximates ALFRED's swimming style. ROXANNE splashes more, takes in water, spits, huffs and puffs. ALFRED approves of her performance and smiles, but his smiles turn to concern as ROXANNE flounders. ALFRED swims to her, and places his arm around her waist from behind to support her.)

ROXANNE

Gasp! Ugh!!

ALFRED

There, I'll help you.... Now take it easy. Breathe easy... That's it. If you like, you can swim back to shore, and I'll see that you get there.

ROXANNE (smiling)

That's all right. I'm okay now. I did it.

ALFRED

Yes you did.

*(ROXANNE takes in water again.
She sputters, coughs, spits,
and smiles again.)*

ROXANNE

If my father cared, he would have shown me how, right?

ALFRED

Well, I don't know.

ROXANNE

It don't matter -- I'm a true swimmer now!

ALFRED

(smiling and nodding agreement)

Ah-hah. Ah-hah.

ROXANNE (proudly)

Anything I want, I got to work hard at -- my Grandmom says. I'm good at workin' hard. I'm going to England in two years to go to law school.

(ALFRED laughs)

ROXANNE

Why do you laugh?

ALFRED

How old are you? Thirteen?

ROXANNE

I was twelve last month.

ALFRED

I think that even in England, you've got to be twenty-one or something to get into law school. But you might be a lawyer eventually... Is that what you want?

ROXANNE

Mmmm. Not sure. I liked Ms. Simpson, the divorce lawyer lady. She smart... Went to law school, an' she told me how to do it and all. And that lady is rich, let me tell *you!*... Beautiful clothes. And - and you should smell her perfume!

ALFRED

You will have the *best* clothes and perfume some day. Ms. Simpson will be jealous.

ROXANNE

And I will be somebody.

ALFRED

I'm sure you will.

ROXANNE

I learn easy. *Real* easy. I know how to cook. I cook delicious goat stew. I know how to take care of a baby -- even real small babies that hardly know how to cry yet. I feed 'em and change 'em. I do that for all my sisters and nephews and nieces.

ALFRED

You know a lot....especially for a young lady.

ROXANNE

That's hardly nothin'. I can chop a tree, build a small house, catch a ball and

beat up anybody two times my size. But I hate fightin'.... You got family?

ALFRED

Yes, I have a wife and two kids. They're twins, ten years old.

ROXANNE

They got light skin, your kids?

ALFRED

Yeah.

ROXANNE

You like them no matter their skin color, I bet. Right?

ALFRED

Sure!

ROXANNE

You're a good dad! I can tell!... Where are your kids?

ALFRED

They're at the resort pool. I don't know why, but they like the pool better than the ocean. We have pools *all over* back home. We fly a thousand miles, and they want another pool! But they like it, so...

ROXANNE

I bet you know a lot of stuff.

ALFRED (confidently)

I guess I do.

ROXANNE

You real easy to talk to, you know?

ALFRED

Thank you.... I hope you have people in your life you can talk to.

ROXANNE

My friends is so... not mature.

ALFRED

Well, they're probably twelve.... You're very advanced for twelve... You can't expect to have friends as... as smart as you.

ROXANNE

Why not?

(Not waiting for an answer, having a different non-sequitor thought. Now boastfully:)

You know how to sew?

ALFRED

Mmm. Not so well.

ROXANNE

You can help a woman have a baby?

ALFRED

How do you mean?

ROXANNE

No no no.... Pull the baby out if you have to, wrap it up, help the mother. Cut the cord. You know, all that bloody stuff!

ALFRED

No! I'd probably faint.

ROXANNE

No you would not. You're a father and you would be strong, to show your children... You know how to make a cloth to cover the dead?

ALFRED

No.

ROXANNE

Okay, I got one for you. You know how to add big numbers?

(ALFRED nods his head happily)

How much are: one million five hundred forty two thousand, six hundred and seventy-two -- PLUS four million, three hundred-eighty-nine thousand, five hundred and twenty six?

ALFRED

I can't do that in my head!

ROXANNE

I can. Five million, eight hundred thirty-two thousand, one hundred and ninety eight!

ALFRED *(stunned)*

You're amazing!

ROXANNE

You want to know a secret? *(laughs)* I bet you're good at secrets.

ALFRED

Always.... I like secrets.

ROXANNE

I knew that answer. I added it up on paper and kept the numbers in my head!
Ya-HA-HA-HA! Ya-HA-HA-HA!

*(ALFRED laughs, too.
ROXANNE takes in water again
and gasps. She gradually recovers.
Smiling, she says:)*

What you do with yourself?

ALFRED

I'm a lawyer.... I work in real estate.

ROXANNE

I know about that.

ALFRED

You do?

ROXANNE

We got a *BIG* real estate up on a hill, near my town. It once belonged to a plantation man. Now they made it a fancy restaurant.

ALFRED

No, what I do is help people buy land, build buildings -- that sort of thing. You think you'd find that interesting?

ROXANNE

Oooh! Look at that shell down there. I'll go get it.

ALFRED

Hey! Hold my hand!!

(ROXANNE grabs ALFRED's hand, then dives, picks up a conch shell and tries with trouble to swim with it. She pulls it out of the water, holds it up proudly to show ALFRED.)

ALFRED

It's beautiful, but--

(ROXANNE promptly sinks under the surface. She comes up again and stays afloat, with the shell, only with maximum effort.)

Listen, why don't you put that shell on the beach? Or *I'll* do it.

(ALFRED takes the shell from ROXANNE,

*goes to the shore, leaves it there,
and returns.)*

ROXANNE

Thank you.... You want to know a *real* secret?

ALFRED

No jokes this time?

ROXANNE (smiling)

My father doesn't like me.... Cause I'm dark black. He's light, but my Mom's dark. He don't see why his children should be dark, and he don't like my brother Joseph neither.

ALFRED

That's terrible!!

ROXANNE

He moved out when I was three and Joseph was born. He told my Mommy no kids of his is goin' to be black -- and he jus' left.

ALFRED

I'm so sorry to hear that.

ROXANNE

My Daddy don't think I could be somebody. But I already do so many things. I show him!

ALFRED

Yes you will. I'm sure!

ROXANNE (angrily)

He burns me up!

*(ROXANNE brushes off her anger,
as if uncomfortable with it.)*

But I pay him no mind! I'm gonna be a real good divorce lawyer. The best in

all Trinidad. Then some day, when he's down an' out, he's gonna come to me for a loan!

ALFRED

You'll give him one?

(ROXANNE purses her lips, shakes her head slowly, deliberating. Then she becomes very angry at the thought and flashes a big NO, turning her head side to side. She becomes very agitated.)

ROXANNE

No loan for *him!* Never!...Never!.... Ooooooohh! Look at that one. Right there! That one's big and pink like a hibiscus. I can get it. I can.

(ROXANNE maneuvers closer to the large shell, still swimming above water.)

ALFRED

Be careful. It's deeper.

ROXANNE

I show *him!*

(ROXANNE dives. She misses the shell on her first grab, turns around, and dives again. She gets it and comes to the surface. She swallows much water, gets it in her lungs and has great trouble. Her eyes begin to roll. ALFRED swims to her, takes the shell with one hand, and tries to support her with his other arm. ROXANNE begins getting limp. Her eyes look dazed. ALFRED supports her fully now. ROXANNE goes limp. ALFRED pulls her towards shore, with one arm around

chest. He gets to shallow water, tosses the shell onto the beach and lifts ROXANNE out of the water, setting her down gently on the beach, her head in his lap. ROXANNE twitches mildly. Her eyes open fleetingly. ALFRED soothes her cheek and brow.)

ROXANNE (*weakly*)

I show *him!*

ALFRED

Yes you will.

(ALFRED continues to stroke her cheek. The sound of the surf builds as we fade to black .)

Yes you will.

END OF PLAY